

# AUSTRALIAN JEWISH HISTORICAL SOCIETY INC.



## NEWSLETTER

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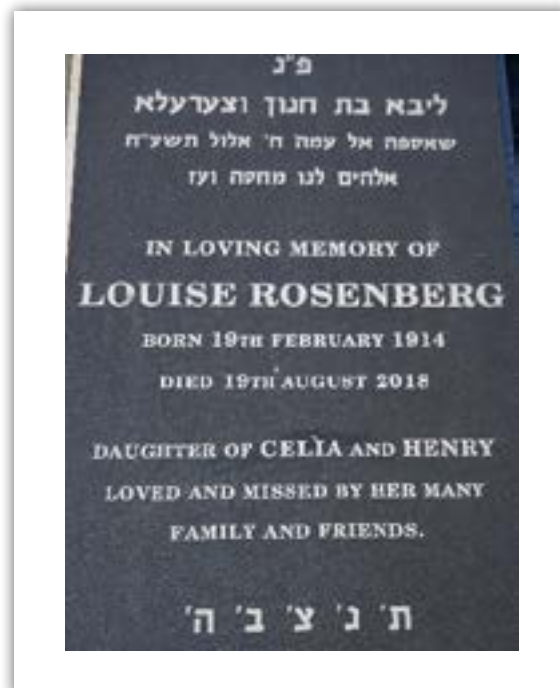
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# ROSH HASHANA GREETINGS

The President and Committee of the Australian Jewish Historical Society extends to all its readers its best wishes, L'Shona Tova Tikatevu, and hope it will be a good year for all Israel, and especially for the members of the Australian Jewish Historical Society.

## LOUISE ROSENBERG OAM (1914 – 2018)



19 August 2019 was the anniversary of the passing of Louise Rosenberg and at 11:00am on Sunday 25 August 2019 a group of family, colleagues and friends gathered for the consecration of her tombstone. Her memory was honoured with the Consecration Service being conducted by Rabbi Ben Elton.



## THE LOUISE ROSENBERG COMMUNITY ARCHIVE

The Society has been aware for some time that it is to be a beneficiary under the will of the Late Louise Rosenberg. Recently, we were advised of the amount of the legacy and when it will be received. The bequest is to the Society “for its general purposes”. The receipt of the bequest will allow for the finalisation of the plans and quotes for the renovation of Level 4 at 146 Darlinghurst Road, which has been used for temporary archive storage. The area will be completely refurbished to archive storage standards including waterproofing, painting, air conditioning, improved lighting and accessioning area as well as the installation of compactuses and shelving.



*Level 4, at present, showing the cramped conditions, temporary shelving and poor lighting.*

It is anticipated that the work will be completed by November 2019. To honour Louise’s memory and acknowledge the many years of devoted service she gave to the Society the area will be known as: - “The Louise Rosenberg Community Archive”.

## REMEMBRANCE CEREMONY FOR FLYING OFFICER ADOLF HOFFMAN AND CREW OF LANCASTER MK1 – HK542 KO-J. Adele Rosalky, President AJHS ACT

On 11 May 2018 I received an unexpected email from Belgium. It was forwarded from the Office Manager at the National Jewish Memorial Centre, Canberra. She added “Adele, not sure if this is genuine or not...”. I followed up with appropriate due diligence to ascertain that the writer was indeed genuine.



The email read:

*Dear Sir, Madam, I would like to connect with the family Hoffman, regarding Adolf David Leon Hoffman, who with his crew died in the night of 25 April 1944 after a mission on Germany on Lancaster Mk I - HK542 KO-J. Next year it will be 75 years ago. He was brother of Hoffman, Earle Samuel, one of the founders of your organization, and Hoffman, Guilda Rebecca, who died very young. We hope next year to have a remembrance in their memory, Greetings from Filip Doms, Belgium, Friends of 115 Squadron.*

It was obvious that the writer had done his research and spent some time scouring the internet to obtain this information. The whole world is interconnected today but, even so, the writer was lucky to make contact first go. He later told me that relatives of some of the other six crew members had taken ten years to locate. He found us via the Commonwealth War Graves Commission and worked his way down the family tree, then examined the GENI website for more information.

In subsequent correspondence with Filip Doms, I also included Adolf's only living sibling, Julius Hoffman of Sydney, as well as my own brother, David Leon Hoffman, who, at birth, was named after his recently deceased uncle. The four siblings, Earle, Adolf, Guilda and Julius were the children of Charles and Hinda Hoffman of Brisbane.

I asked Filip what his connection was to 115 Squadron. He wrote:

*My connection in the 115 Squadron started in 2002. I was at an exhibition at Mechelen with the theme "50 years Liberation of Mechelen". There was a brochure which read about a Lancaster bomber that crashed just two streets of my Home at Sint.Katelijne. Waver, nobody survived. The search for families was on, and in 2004 we unveiled a monument for this crew. The airplane that your family member was on crashed on the same night and was shot down by the same Night fighter crew. For many years we talked about this crew, nothing was ever done for them to remember their sacrifice, only one person in the village remembers the crash. We have decided next year, at the 75th anniversary, it's a strange word for this occasion, to remember the 7 people who died that night for our freedom.*

I was deeply moved by his story and decided that my husband David and I would attend the ceremony. My two cousins, Roberta Honigman in Melbourne (Julius' daughter) and Jaelle Thompson in Brisbane (Guilda's daughter) also expressed a wish to honour the uncle that we had never known. On 4 May 2019 Adolf was represented at the ceremony by his three nieces and their partners.

Flying Officer Adolf David Leon Hoffman was born on 24 November 1922 in Melbourne and raised by his parents in Brisbane. He was an accomplished scholar at Brisbane Grammar School.





He was editor of the school magazine, Captain of Griffith House, lieutenant in the Brisbane Grammar School Rifles, and a member of the school committee. He won a number of prizes for essays, as well as prizes for his proficiency in mathematics and 'distinguished diligence and good conduct'.

He was also a champion athlete, cricketer and gymnast. At 15 he won every sprint event in the Queensland Junior Athletics Championship and shattered the State Resident Record for 880 yards. Twice he became the under-16 champion athlete at his school. In his final years of competition he won the Norman Waraker Memorial Cup, the Victor Selheim Memorial Trophy, and the Old Boys Association Trophy

Six months into his economics degree at the University of Queensland he enlisted in the Royal Australian Air Force. After training, receiving his navigator wings passing with distinction, he transferred to the Royal Air Force in Bomber Command.



*Adolf Hoffman (aged 21)*



In his last year at Brisbane Grammar School, Adolf wrote a poem as his own epitaph. Published in the school magazine, it read:

*For me no sculptured marble raise  
No busts in brass, no names in stone  
Write me no books, no faults condone  
In lavish words and unguent praise.  
Call no my time – “those golden days”.  
To be to children, awesome, shown;  
Not history’s pause, to stand alone,  
No passing glory, epic lays.  
For I shall tread but once these ways  
And go my way and meet my end  
My coming shall no portents blaze;  
My going shall but few hearts rend;  
And this shall be sufficient praise.  
“In Duty’s wake he did attend.”*

Flying Officer Hoffman was just 21 years old when he was killed in action on Anzac Day 1944 in Belgium, together with the entire crew of their Lancaster, returning from a bombing raid over Karlsruhe, Germany. He is buried at the Heverlee War Cemetery in Belgium. His sacrifice was marked at the Australian War Memorial in Canberra on Sunday 6 July 2014 during the daily Last Post ceremony, instigated by his brother Julius Hoffman.

The 4 May 2019 was a cold day in Mechelen, with a scudding sky, freezing showers, and sunny interludes. All the relatives of the crew members from Australia, England and Canada, who had travelled to Mechelen to prepare for the memorial event, boarded a bus, and met each other for the first time. We also met the Friends of Squadron 115 (motto: ‘Despite the Elements’) who had been communicating with us over the past six months, Filip Doms, Erwin Sollie and Wim Goovaerts. As we chatted, it became clear that these amateur historians had been acquiring details of this mission and others, over a period of many years, and regarded the task as a personal obligation of respect for those whose lives were lost in the pursuit of the freedom of their country. These quiet unassuming men exhibited the utmost modesty about their research, paying tribute to those who had fallen.

We were first taken to Heverlee War Cemetery located 25 km south-east of Mechelen, adjacent to the town of Leuven. The cemetery was started after the war finished and contains 984 WWII burials brought in from temporary burial places over a wide area of Eastern Belgium. Of these, 738



were airmen, most of whom were shot down in strategic bombing operations. Of the total number of burials, 753 are British, 157 Canadians, 45 Australian, 17 New Zealand, 1 South African, 11 Polish and 1 American. There, in grounds immaculately maintained by the Commonwealth War Graves Commission, we viewed the seven graves of the crew of the Lancaster -- one Magen David and six crosses in a solemn line. Our family members placed stones on Adolf's grave and David Rosalky recited the memorial prayer, while relatives of other crew members laid flowers on graves. A short ceremony took place at the cenotaph with words honouring the crew, and a wreath was laid followed by a minute's silence. It was a deeply moving tribute.



*David & Adele Rosalky, Roberta Honigman, Erwin Sollie, Wim Goovaerts at Heverlee Cenotaph*



*Adolf's medals Jay & John Thompson, Sam Honigman*

We travelled on through the Belgium countryside to Alken, some 60km to the east. After generous hospitality for lunch, the main event began. We found ourselves following in procession behind the Mayor of Alken and his Councillors, a brass band, flags, bagpipes, ex-servicemen and women, defence vehicles with people in WWII uniforms, and finally the residents of Alken. It seemed that the entire population of Alken had come out to honour our young men after so many years.



*Procession through Alken*



*Alken War Memorial Monument*



The commemoration took place at the exact site on which the Lancaster had come down in 1944, on the edge of today's Alken. This had been located by Erwin Sollie who, some years earlier, had identified the spot using a metal detector. The site was now landscaped with a paved circle housing a newly unveiled monument in the centre. The monument is designed in the shape of the tail of a Lancaster bomber with a plaque in the centre inscribed with the names of the seven young men. Photos of the men had been placed around the paving, and above were the flags of England, Canada, Australia, Belgium and Flanders.

Speeches and a detailed description of the events of the night of 24-25 April 1944 followed. The mission to Karlsruhe had been a failure due to cloudy weather conditions, and only the northern part of Karlsruhe was seriously damaged, most of the bombs falling outside the city. On the return flight, due to cloud and strong winds, the Lancasters flew well north of the planned escape route, close to German defences, making them vulnerable to attack from German night-fighters. As the struggling Lancaster approached Alken, the crew had manoeuvred so as to avoid a catastrophic hit on the town, saving many lives.

The two Lancasters targeted that night were both shot down by the German night-fighter Oberleutnant Heinz-Wolfgang Schnauffer and his crew. Schnauffer had a record of successfully targeting 121 allied aircraft. After the war in 1954, Schnauffer was killed in a car accident. On the night of 24-25 April 1944, Mannheim, 30 miles to the north, recorded a raid by approximately 100 aircraft, and Darmstadt, Ludwigshafen and Heidelberg were also hit by aircraft which failed to find the main target. That night Bomber Command lost 11 Lancasters and 8 Halifaxes.







As the ceremony continued, speeches were followed with the laying of floral wreathes, the Last Post, a minute's silence, and the playing of the national anthems of England, Canada and Australia. Filip Doms had earlier apologised that: 'Very sorry to inform you the BBMF Lancaster will not fly over as planned, the old lady has technical problems'. It didn't detract from the ceremony, and with only one aged Lancaster available in England, chances of airworthiness were slim.

At the conclusion of the ceremony, everyone involved walked on to a local club where refreshments were offered, giving the relatives a chance to speak with the citizens of Alken. It was heart-warming to receive the welcome the townsfolk displayed to the families of those young men, whose sacrifice they acknowledged with dignity, respect and gratitude. After 75 years, they had not been forgotten.

A postscript to the ceremony: While travelling some weeks later in Vienna, I sat down next to an English woman who engaged me in conversation about my travels. Mentioning that we had come to Belgium for a family event, she picked up on this with interest. I described in more detail the ceremony we had attended. She informed me she had watched film of it in England and she knew many details of the day. It was pleasing to hear that the commemoration had received such broad exposure.

## **HOBART SYNAGOGUE – 175th ANNIVERSARY**

Jeff Schneider



The Hobart Synagogue will be celebrating the 175th anniversary of its opening on the weekend of 3 – 5 July 2020. Consecrated on 4 July 1845, the Hobart Synagogue is the oldest synagogue in Australia. An exciting program of events is being planned to mark this historic achievement.



The program will commence on Friday 3 July with an event hosted by the Governor of Tasmania, Professor the Honourable Kate Warner, at Government house. This will be followed by an Erev Shabbat Progressive service and a Shabbat dinner. On Saturday morning there will be an Orthodox Shabbat Shacharit service. Other events being planned include a panel discussion on Saturday afternoon, with experts discussing the history of Jewish life in Tasmania. Themes likely to be covered include: Jewish convicts, the role of Jewish Tasmanians in the greater community and post-World War II Jewish migration to Tasmania. On Sunday, there will be tours of sites of Jewish significance around Hobart, including the Jewish Cemetery. There are also plans for a special concert that will recreate the music performed at the original 1845 consecration.

The remarkable story of Jews in Tasmania began in 1803 when six Jewish convicts arrived on The Calcutta from England. More Jewish convicts continued to arrive, and eventually they were joined by opportunistic free settlers. Services were held in inns and homes, such as Judah Solomon's Temple House, which still stands and will be available for a special tour on the anniversary weekend. When it was decided that a synagogue should be built, the congregation made an unsuccessful appeal to Governor John Franklin for land. In response, Judah Solomon donated part of his garden for the synagogue.

On 9 August 1843, the foundation stone for the synagogue was laid, followed by the consecration on 4 July 1845. The consecration was an elaborate event featuring an orchestra and a choir. Many of the leading citizens of Hobart Town attended. The local newspaper gave lavish praise to both the ceremony and the building, particularly to the grand chandelier found in the sanctuary.

The synagogue is designed in the Egyptian revival architectural style. Egypt was synonymous with antiquity, and the Egyptian appearance of the Hobart synagogue building was most likely intended to suggest Judaism's ancient roots. Above the entrance is a Hebrew inscription from the Book of Exodus: B'chol hamakom asher azkir et sh'mi avo aleicha uveirachticha. (In every place where I shall cause my name to be remembered, I shall come to you and bless you).

In the 1850s the Tasmanian Jewish population reached a peak of 452, but soon reduced, among other reasons, due to the end of convict transportation and the gold rush in Victoria. The decline in population continued until revitalisation at the beginning of the 20th century by Samuel Benjamin, the grandson of Judah Solomon, with help of a generous bequest from his uncle, Joseph Solomon (Judah's son). Under Benjamin's leadership, the congregation eventually resumed holding regular services. In 1918, the Diamond Jubilee (75th) of the laying of the foundation stone was celebrated. The event was attended by many prominent Hobart citizens and received extensive media coverage.

The small congregation was further helped by the arrival of post-World War II European migrants, making invaluable contributions including the congregation's two history books, *Hobart Hebrew Congregation: 150 years of survival against all odds* by Hedi Fixel, and *A Few from Afar: Jewish Lives in Tasmania from 1804*, edited by Peter and Ann Elias.

The synagogue is now home to both progressive and orthodox groups. Life for the small Jewish population continues to be challenging, but the congregation remains vibrant and proud, led by enthusiastic members with a self-reliant attitude. Recently, there have been several young families with children who have joined the congregation to make for an optimistic future.

**Editor:** - Further information on the history of the Hobart Synagogue, can be found in the following –  
*Hobart Hebrew Congregation: 150 Years of Survival Against All Odds*, Heidi Fixel,  
 AJHS Journal Vol XII Part 3.  
*The History of Hobart Jewry*, Rabbi L M Goldman,  
 AJHS Journal Vol XI Part 6.  
*A Century of Hobart Jewry*, Herbert I Wolf,  
 AJHS Journal Vol VIII Part 5.

Members are now able to read these articles online on the [AJHS website](#).

## JEWISH WALK OF SYDNEY – MOBILE APP.



*York St. Synagogue.*



*The Great Synagogue*



*Bridge St. Synagogue.*

The Society has been successful in obtaining funding from the Sydney City Council, through their Community Heritage Programme, to develop a mobile app for tourists and visitors to use for a “walk of Jewish Sydney”. The purpose of the app, development of which is being coordinated by Peter Keeda, is to provide people with a self-guided tour of historic Jewish sites in the Sydney CBD.

Peter is looking for some of the interesting, and not so well-known stories, pertaining to buildings in the CBD owned by Jewish families over the years, to add to the website.

If you would like to delve into your family history and assist him, preferably including photos, and address(es), he can be contacted at:- **Peter Keeda** - [keedad@gmail.com](mailto:keedad@gmail.com)

## DECIPHERING THE FRANCIS LYON COHEN BOOKPLATE

Rabbi Dr Benjamin Elton







Several of the books in the Rabbi L.A. Falk Memorial Library at The Great Synagogue come from the collection of Rabbi Francis Lyon Cohen (1862-1934), Chief Minister of the Synagogue from 1905 to 1934. In 1908 he designed a bookplate which can be found in some of those volumes. It is rich in symbolism, and worth understanding.

The principal motif is a Torah scroll, a natural and suitable choice for a rabbi. It is the decoration of the mantle and the other ornaments which are most significant. At the top is a crown, such as adorns many Torah scrolls. It is inscribed Keter Torah - 'Crown of Torah', which of course describes the object itself, but also to Cohen's rabbinic status. It is a reference to Ethics of the Fathers 4:17:

*Rabbi Shimon used to say: There are three crowns—the crown of the Torah, the crown of the priesthood, and the crown of kingship, but the crown of a good name surpasses them all.*

Below the higher crown, is another crown embroidered onto the mantle, inscribed Keter Kehuna – 'Crown of Priesthood', referring to Rabbi Cohen's Priestly status. Below that are the two hands stretched out in the manner the Priests adopt when they bless the people during the synagogue service. This is somewhat ironic as during Cohen's tenure at The Great Synagogue the Priests did not perform their blessing.

To the left of the pair of hands is a lyre with the Hebrew Zemirot Yisrael – 'Songs of Israel'. As well as a Rabbi, Cohen was also a distinguished Jewish musicologist. In his Rabbinic career Cohen was the first Anglo-Jewish military chaplain. On the right of the hands are two trumpets, which were blown in battle during biblical times with the words Mashuach Lemilchama- 'Anointed for War', referring to the Priest who was anointed specially to serve among the soldiers fighting for the Israelite nation, the original Jewish military chaplain.

Beneath the hands are three flowers. In the centre an English rose, symbolising Cohen's country of origin and the British Empire. It is flanked by two banksias, representing Australia and underneath are Irish shamrocks, because Cohen's first rabbinical position was in Dublin.

The top of the bookmark features Cohen's title and name in English, and at the bottom of the mantle is written Misifrei Moreinu Pinchas Yehuda HaCohen – 'From the books of our teacher Pinchas Yehuda the Priest'. The floor on which the Torah is standing is chequered, a reference to Freemasonry, and Cohen was an active Freemason.

As the designer, Cohen has placed his initials and the date in the bottom left corner. This bookplate is full of ideas and symbols, encapsulating what Cohen considered were the most important aspects of his professional life.

## FREDERICK ALFRED ABRAHAMS

### Jeannette Tsoulos

Whilst hundreds of young Australian Jews enlisted in Australia in WWI, a dozen or so enlisted overseas, for a variety of reasons. One of these was Frederick Alfred Abrahams whose family suffered tragedy beyond his being killed in action. Born in Melbourne in 1891, he was one of four children and the only son of Louis Abrahams and Golda née Brasch.

Louis was a Londoner and Golda was born in Melbourne to parents from Poland and Germany. Louis arrived in Melbourne as a child. An artist at heart, he studied at the Artisans' School of Design and the National Gallery of Victoria Art School where he met Frederick McCubbin and other young artists – Tom Roberts, Arthur Streeton and Charles Conder. From 1885 for four years they would take the train to Box Hill where they had an artists' camp and spend the weekend painting en plein air, returning on Sunday night to their homes and day jobs. Some years later, with a handful of other artists, they relocated to a farm near Heidelberg which became known as the Heidelberg School.



Photo 1



Photo 2

Louis married Golda Brasch in 1888 and Tom Roberts painted her portrait as a wedding present (Photo 1). He also painted Louis' portrait, which is in the National Gallery of Australia (Photo 2). McCubbin, Streeton and Julian Ashton all painted portraits of Abrahams (whom they nicknamed The Don), and Abrahams sat for two McCubbin's paintings, *Down on his Luck* (Photo 3) and *The Bush Burial*. The artists were a very close group, so much so that McCubbin named his first son Louis after his friend, and Louis named his son Frederick after McCubbin.



*Photo 1*

Abrahams was also working in his family's cigar business, B Sniders & Abrahams and was finding less time for painting with his friends. However, the success of the business enabled him and his brother Lawrence to buy many of their works. He also supplied them with cigar box lids on which they painted 9 by 5 inch "impressions", which formed half of the paintings in the "9 by 5 Impressionist Exhibition" of 1889, the first of its kind in Australia. He and Lawrence thus became important art patrons, which Golda continued after Louis' death. 9 by 5 Impressions are also included in the Australian Impressionism current exhibition at the National Gallery of Australia in Canberra.

Golda's brother Reuben Brasch had a successful clothing manufacturing business in Sydney's Castlereagh St, and a Department store in Oxford St at Hyde Park Corner. He and his brothers spent their weekends relaxing at Curlew Camp, a cluster of tents with a dining floor on Little Sirius Cove at Mosman. They were joined around 1891 by Arthur Streeton and Tom Roberts, who'd come up from Heidelberg and were holding art classes in Sydney. It was an idyllic spot and both artists created some of their best-known paintings there. Long after the artists had left, the camp was closed to allow the building of Taronga Zoo above the site.

Louis meanwhile suffered from depression, exacerbated by unfounded rumours about the business. Plagued by despair and insomnia he committed suicide in December 1903. His youngest child, Ruby, was only 7 and the eldest, Julia was 14. The family struggled on and in 1908 suffered another tragedy - the death of May, aged 16. Julia moved to London where she married Russian businessman and engineer Nathan (later Norman) Lasdun and they had a child, Denys, in 1914. In 1915, Golda took her unmarried daughter Ruby and son Frederick to London to visit Julia.



The “war to end all wars” had begun and Frederick enlisted in the 16th Battalion, Queen’s Westminster Rifles as a rifleman. He died in the Battle of the Somme on 10 September 1916.

This is not the end of the story, however. Julia was widowed in 1919 after only a few years of marriage. She was an excellent pianist and became an accompanist for concert artists. Her son, Denys Lasdun, became a prominent architect and was knighted in 1976. His buildings tend towards the Brutalist style. Among the best known are the National Theatre on London’s South Bank, the Royal College of Physicians and the IBM Building.

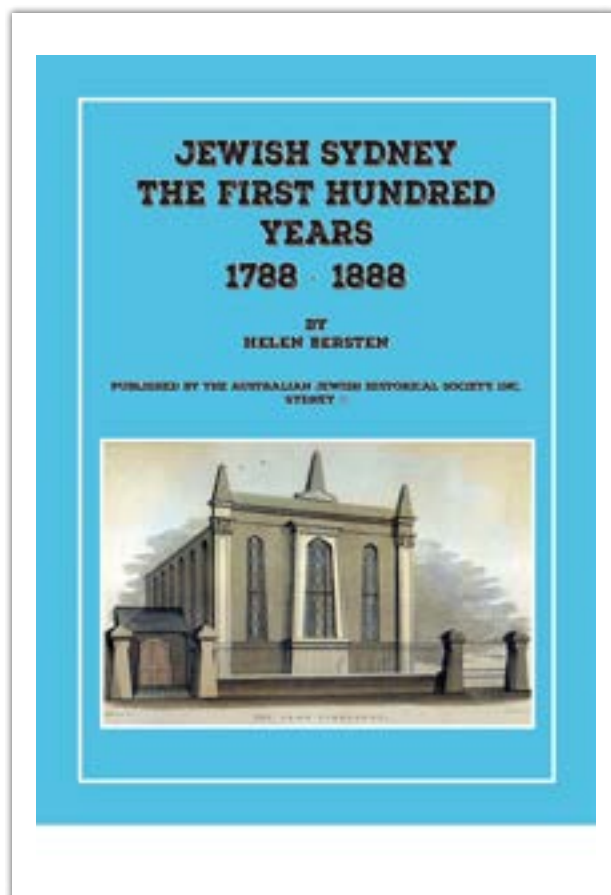
Other young Jewish Australians who enlisted overseas also boast interesting backgrounds. One was the cousin of “Karri” Davies of Boer War fame, another came from a family of distinguished doctors and two were members of well-known families who’d made their mark in country towns Maitland and Tamworth.

## RECENT PUBLICATIONS

The following publications, published by the Society are available for purchase.

- *Hans Kimmel Competition Essays 1979-2007. Edited by Russell Stern and Dr Sophie Gelski.....\$20.00.*
- *The Road to the Menzies Enquiry – Suspected War Criminals in Australia, By Leslie Caplan.....\$25.00.*
- *To My Brave Wife – Dunera Notes from an ‘enemy alien’, by Dr. Kurt Epstein. Edited by Yoram Epstein, Konrad Kwiet, Helen Bersten, Lee Kersten..... \$25.00*
- *Jews of the Outback – The centenary of the Broken Hill Synagogue 1910-2010. Edited by Suzanne Rutland, Leon Mann and Margaret Price..... \$20.00.*
- *Jewish Sydney – The First One Hundred Years, by Helen Bersten.....\$16.50.*





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# AUSTRALIAN JEWISH HISTORICAL SOCIETY INC.



Philip Moses. Newsletter Editor.

Contributions to the Newsletter are most welcome. They can be mailed to  
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NSW 2010, or emailed to [admin@ajhs.com.au](mailto:admin@ajhs.com.au).

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